



NEWS RELEASE

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Judge Overturns Murder Conviction in First Conviction Review Unit Case

In the first case brought by the District Attorney's Conviction Review Unit, a judge today overturned the conviction of a former security guard charged with killing a young woman in Palmdale after prosecutors said there was newly discovered evidence that pointed to his innocence.

Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge William C. Ryan vacated the conviction of Raymond Lee Jennings, 42.

"I know this process has been very difficult for the O'Keefe family," District Attorney Jackie Lacey said. "But this ruling represents an important acknowledgement that my office is dedicated to serving justice, even when it means reopening a closed case based on newly discovered evidence."

The case was reviewed by the Conviction Review Unit, which was launched by District Attorney Lacey in June 2015, and marks the first time the unit has asked a judge to overturn a conviction. The unit reviews wrongful conviction claims made by defendants. To date, it has received nearly 1,100 claims of innocence.

Jennings was found guilty in December 2009 of second-degree murder in the 2000 slaying of 18-year-old college student Michelle O'Keefe. Two juries previously were unable to unanimously reach a decision.

Jennings was serving a sentence of 40 years to life in state prison.

In the case against Jennings, the office lost faith in his conviction after new evidence cast doubt on the original findings. The murder case remains under investigation by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.